Ceiling on land for multi-purpose SEZs

1659. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of reasons for Government to fix the 5000 hectares of cultivable lands as land ceiling for multi-purpose SEZs; and

(b) the justification for setting such ceiling of cultivable land for the SEZs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act, 2005 and SEZ rules, 2006 prescribed only the minimum area criteria for various types of Special Economic Zones, including for multi product SEZs. The Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM) at its meeting held on 5th April, 2007 after considering various issues related to the SEZs had fixed the upper limit of the area required for multi- product SEZs at 5000 hectares. Pursuant to this decision, the SEZ Rules, 2006 has been amended on 12th October 2007.

Tax exemption for infrastructure development in SEZs

1660. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Commerce Ministry is working on rules to provide tax exemption to sub-contractor for developing infrastructure in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs);

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that this move goes contrary to the Finance Bill, 2007, which proposes limiting tax concession to only developers; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) The Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Act 2005 provides for tax exemptions to the Developers including co-developers for developing infrastructure in the SEZs . However, the SEZ Rules, 2006 provides that the said exemption can also be availed on their behalf by their contractor subject to fulfillment of the prescribed conditions.

Strength of sepoys in Army

1661. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of the posts of sepoys in the Army as on 30th November, 2007 both sanctioned and actually in place;

(b) the reasons for the gap in case that is more than five per cent of the sanctioned strength; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to ensure that full strength of the real work force in the Army is achieved?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A. K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) The sanctioned strength of Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) including sepoys in the Army and those actually in place (as on 30th September, 2007) is 11,01,090 and 11,20,077 respectively. There is, therefore, no shortage of PBORs in the Army.

However, there is a shortage of 11,371 officers in the Army which is mainly in the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel and below. Serveral measures have been taken by Government to enhance recruitment in the Army. All Officers including those in short Service Commission (SSC) have been made eligible to hold substantive rank of Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel and equivalents after 2, 6 and 13 years of reckonable service respectively. The term of SSC Officers has been extended to 14 years. This has made the Army an attractive career option. Besides Army has undertaken sustained image projection publicity campaign to create awareness among the youth. Awareness campaigns, participation in career fairs and exhibitions, advertisements in print and electronic media are also some of the other measures in this direction.

Modernisation of Infantry Battalions

1662. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that plan to modernize the infantry battalions and equip them which light-weight combat weapons night vision device, light weight combat kit etc. will take at least 10-12 years *i.e.* if adequate funds can be provided to them;

(b) whether the sluggish pace of modernization will result in technological obsolescence by the time army is equipped with these systems and the cutting edge of infantry battalions will be lost; and

(c) if so, what action Government propose to take to modernize the infantry battalions without losing much time to maintain the cutting edge?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A. K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Modernization of Infantry Battalions is an on-going process and is underway. While a number of modern weapons and equipment have already been procured, the plan envisages to induct substantial new technology and better weapon systems during the 11th Plan period. The requirement of hi-tech weapons and equipment is constantly reviewed to ensure replacement of existing technology by higher version as warranted by the operational necessity and funds provided accordingly.

Cartelisation of suppliers to ordnance factories

1663. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN:
SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state: